

Exhibit 80

Jeff Amy, *Fired Engineer Sued, Saying Southern Co. Retaliated Over Kemper Co. Power Plant Concerns*, CLARION LEDGER (Aug. 8, 2017), <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2017/08/08/kemper-co-power-plant-engineer-lawsuit/550319001/>

Clarion Ledger

NEWS

Fired engineer sues, saying Southern Co. retaliated over Kemper Co. power plant concerns

Jeff Amy Associated Press

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A fired engineer at a now-aborted Mississippi Power Co. plant sued the utility's parent company Tuesday, saying an order to reinstate him is being ignored.

Brett Wingo of Homewood, Alabama, filed the whistleblower retaliation case in federal court in Birmingham, Alabama. Wingo says in the suit that he tried to tell executives with Atlanta-based Southern Co. that construction at the Kemper County power plant wouldn't meet deadlines promised to investors. Wingo says he raised concerns with executives as high as CEO Tom Fanning before he was fired, and describes that firing as retaliation.

Spokespersons for Southern didn't immediately return phone calls and emails seeking comment.

The suit says Wingo sought to report safety concerns and unrealistic construction schedules internally, but was ignored and then was warned that he was "digging a hole" for his career.

Wingo complained to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which ruled in January that Southern should rehire Wingo and pay back wages and benefits, but Southern has yet to act on that order. Wingo's suit demands double back pay, plus additional damages.

The \$7.5 billion Kemper plant was designed to gasify soft lignite coal, strip out much of the carbon dioxide and other pollutants and burn the gas to generate power. But the plant ended up more than \$4.5 billion over budget and three years behind schedule, with many of the delays Wingo foretold.

"The Kemper project stands as a monument to the consequences of concealment of the truth, and what too often happens to those who step forward to reveal the truth: they are retaliated

against, rather than embraced and protected," Wingo's lawyers wrote.

The Mississippi Public Service Commission in June ordered the utility and regulatory staff to negotiate a settlement aimed at running the plant only on natural gas and shielding customers from paying for the gasifier. A regulatory staff attorney said Tuesday that those talks continue.

Southern wrote off \$2.8 billion worth of gasifier investment when it announced quarterly earnings last week, adding to \$3.1 billion it had earlier lost on the project.

Wingo's suit said he warned supervisors as early as summer 2012 that the company couldn't complete Kemper before the then-promised deadline of May 2014, and later began telling executives they would illegally mislead shareholders by promising that date.

The company was trying to complete the plant during 2014 to claim federal tax credits. After the initial deadline slipped, Wingo said managers manipulated the schedule to "fraudulently" to claim 2014 completion was still possible.

Wingo also said he was concerned that piping was poorly installed, with suit saying he feared pressure could lead to "shortcuts on important safety standards."

Wingo said he reported his concerns to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in October 2014, claiming the company defrauded investors by misrepresenting the construction schedule. An SEC inquiry continues.

Wingo was fired in February 2016, after a long period on administrative leave when the company paid him for no work. Later that year, he provided documents and recordings to The New York Times for an article highly critical of the plant.

The company faces other Kemper-related lawsuits. Shareholders are suing in federal court in Atlanta, while a company that was supposed to receive carbon dioxide from the plant is suing in Georgia state court. A case involving Mississippi Power ratepayers was dismissed by a Mississippi state court judge in June, but is being appealed.

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